

Abstract

This dissertation was inspired by Erskine et al.'s (1999) model of relational needs. It aims to deepen understanding of relational needs within humanistic and integrative psychotherapy. Drawing from an in-depth literature review and detailed case study, it examines how relational needs emerge and are expressed within the therapeutic relationship. The inquiry considers both theoretical perspectives and my own embodied experiences of relational needs, positioning the therapeutic relationship as the primary vehicle for psychological change. Findings suggest that unmet relational needs often originate from early deficits. Addressing these needs in the here-and-now requires an attuned, reflexive, and curious therapeutic presence. The dissertation also highlights the importance of integrating contemporary research, especially in relation to underrepresented cultural perspectives and proposes play as an additional relational need.